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Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-13 /085 W
----------124536 120610Z /20
R 120150Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8890
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0046

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR MILI LA RP
SUBJECT: LAO SUPPORT FOR "LIBERATION MOVEMENTS"

SUMMARY: A JANUARY 11 CALL ON THE LAO FOREIGN MINISTRY'S PERMANENT UNDERSECRETARY PRODUCED AN ADMISSION THAT THERE WERE VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN LAOS. THE UNDERSECRETARY MAINTAINED THAT THERE WAS NO CONFLICT BETWEEN LAO SUPPORT FOR LIBERATION MOVEMENTS AND LAO SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-INTERFERENCE IN OTHER COUNTRIES' INTERNAL AFFAIRS. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE PHILIPPINES WERE "NOT INDEPENDENT" BECAUSE THEY PERMITTED FOREIGN TROOPS AND BASES ON THEIR TERRITORY. END SUMMARY.

1. I TOOK THE OCCASION OF MY RETURN FROM HONG KONG TO CALL JANUARY 11 ON SOUBANH SRITHIRATH, CHEF DE CABINET (PERMANENT UNDERSECRETARY) IN THE LAO FOREIGN MINISTRY,
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TO TELL HIM OF THE CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING AND TO UPDATE HIM ON THE RESPONSE THUS FAR TO HIS JANUARY 4 REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY FOOD AID (SEPTEL).

2. I TOLD SOUBANH THAT I HAD SEEN SEVERAL OFFICIALS IN HONG KONG WHOM HE KNEW SUCH AS AMBASSADOR MANSFIELD, AMBASSADOR WOODCOCK, AND MR. OAKLEY. I EXPLAINED THAT

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DURING THE MEETING WE HAD DISCUSSED U.S. RELATIONS WITH CHINA, ASEAN, AND JAPAN. I SAID I WOULD SEND HIM A COPY OF THE JANUARY 9 WIRELESS FILE ARTICLE BASED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE'S HONG KONG PRESS CONFERENCE.

3. AFTER OUR DISCUSSION OF THE LAO FOOD AID REQUEST, I ASKED SOUBANH IF HE COULD POSSIBLY DISPEL THE CONFUSION IN MY MIND WHICH HAD BEEN PRODUCED BY TWO PASSAGES IN THE DECEMBER 28 JOINT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF VIETNAMESE FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN DUY TRINH'S VISIT TO LAOS. I SAID I DID NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THE STATEMENT THAT THE " TWO PARTIES TOTALLY SUPPORT THE JUST STRUGGLE OF THE PEOPLES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, DEMOCRACY, PEACE, AND TRUE NEUTRALITY" FITTED WITH THE COMMUNIQUE'S STATEMENT A FEW LINES LATER THAT THE TWO PARTIES SUPPORTED "MUTUAL RESPECT FOR INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, NON-AGRESSION, AND NON-INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS."

4. SOUBANH SAID THAT THE PASSAGE ABOUT SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLES WAS STANDARD LAO POLICY WHICH HAD BEEN STATED PUBLICLY MANY TIMES. I SAID I KNEW THAT, BUT I STILL DID NOT SEE HOW IT WAS CONSISTENT WITH A POLICY OF NON-INTERFERENCE IN OTHER COUNTRIES' INTERNAL AFFAIRS. SOUBANH SAID THAT THERE WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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NO INCONSISTENCY. LAOS, FOR EXAMPLE, DID NOT THINK THAT THE PHGNLIPPINES WERE AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY BECAUSE THEY HAD FOREIGN TROOPS AND BASES ON THEIR TERRITORY. LAOS WOULD THUS SUPPORT THE PHILIPPINE PEOPLE IN OPPOSING THE PRESENCE OF THESE TROOPS AND BASES.

5. I ASKED SOUBANH WHETHER I HAD HEARD HIM CORRECTLY AND WHETHER HE REALLY DID TELL ME THAT HE DID NOT THINK THE PHILIPPINES WERE INDEPENDENT. HE CONFIRMED THAT THAT WAS WHAT HE HAD SAID. I SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO PARDON ME FOR SPEAKING DIRECTLY, BUT THERE WERE LARGE NUMBERS OF VIETNAMESE TROOPS IN LAOS BUT THAT THE LAO STILL BELIEVED THEY WERE INDEPENDENT.

6. SOUBANH DID NOT BAT AN EYE, BUT NEITHER DID HE TAKE UP MY POINT. HE DID SAY THAT VIETNAMESE WERE IN LAOS BECAUSE THE LAO WANTED THEM THERE AND BECAUSDE THERE WAS A LONG TRADITION OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN LAOS AND VIET NAM. I SAID THAT THE SAME COULD BE SAID OF THE U.S. BASED IN THE PHILIPPINES AND OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE U.S. SOUBANH THEN WENT OFF

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INTO A DESCRIPTION OF LAO SUPPORT FOR LIBERATION MOVE-
MENTS, POINTING OUT THAT LAOS SUPPORTED THOSE
STRUGGLING AGAINST APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA BUT
APPARENTLY IMPLYING THAT THIS SUPPORT COULD NEVER
AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.

8. AT THE END OF OUR CONVERSATION SOUBANH SAID HE WAS
GLAD THAT THE U.S. WAS MAINTAINING AN EMBASSY IN VIEN-
TIANE BECAUSE IT MEANT THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO HAVE
DISCUSSIONS SUCH AS THIS ON MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST
AND TO CLEAR AWAY ANY POSSIBLE MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

8. COMMENT: IT IS INTERESTING THAT SOUBANH MADE NO
ATTEMPT WHATSOEVER TO DENY THE PRESENCE OF VIETNAMESE
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TROOPS IN LAOS. IT IS ALSO INTERESTING THAT HE SEEMED
EITHER COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF OR COMPLETELY UNCONCERNED
ABOUT THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF LAOS CALLING THE PHILIPPINES NOT
INDEPENDENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LIBERATION FRONTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VIENTI00046
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780017-0736
Format: TEL
From: VIENTIANE
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Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3785207
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAO SUPPORT FOR \"LIBERATION MOVEMENTS\" SUMMARY: A JANUARY 11 CALL ON THE LAO FOREIGN MINIS- TRY\'S PERMANENT UNDERSECRETARY PRODUCED AN ADMISSI
TAGS: MILI, LA, RP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f740fce3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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